



Juvenile Justice in 2005: Reshaping Troubled Lives, Ensuring Public Safety

In terms of improving troubled young lives and forging a hopeful new direction for juvenile offenders in State custody, the collaborative efforts of the Attorney General's Office and the Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) paid important dividends in 2005.

AG Issues Directive Mandating Stationhouse Adjustments

On December 7, 2005, Attorney General Harvey announced a directive mandating that all police departments in New Jersey are to use "stationhouse adjustment" techniques — an alternative approach to resolving matters involving juveniles who are caught engaging in minor delinquent activity.

A stationhouse adjustment requires a police officer who is handling a minor juvenile delinquency offense to meet with the juvenile's parent, guardian, or care giver — and the victim, if willing — to discuss the offense.

An officer conducting a stationhouse adjustment may refer a juvenile for needed services and, if property has been stolen or damaged, require the juvenile to make restitution in some form. Typically, the police officer will seek assurances that the juvenile will avoid committing future offenses.

"The stationhouse adjustment process allows police officers to resolve minor disputes without the need to file a complaint with the court," said Attorney General Harvey. "The goal is to effectively supervise our young people so that they make better decisions to avoid criminal offenses. We also expect this process to give victims of minor offenses a quick remedy. This directive culminates more than two years of study, research and collaboration among affected agencies."

In May 2004, Attorney General Harvey appointed a Stationhouse Adjustment Working Group to report on the State's use of stationhouse adjustment policies and procedures, and to make recommendations to ensure equal treatment of juveniles in every jurisdiction. The Working

Group was established in response to evidence of inconsistent use of stationhouse adjustment practices found by a statewide Juvenile Disparity Inquiry (conducted by the Attorney General's Office, the Judiciary, the Juvenile Justice Commission and local County Youth Services Commissions).

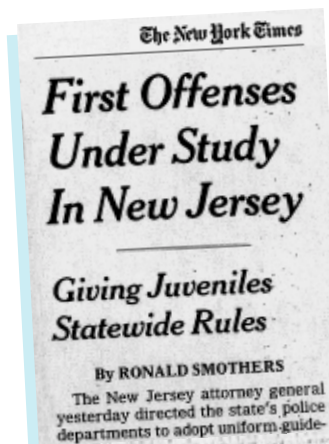
Based on the Juvenile Disparity Inquiry, it appeared that stationhouse adjustment practices were virtually non-existent in some towns, and used regularly in other jurisdictions. The result was that, in some towns, a complaint was being filed every time a juvenile was found committing a minor offense, while in other towns, first-time juvenile offenders caught committing the same type of offense were being diverted, and avoiding court involvement. According to Attorney General Harvey, stationhouse adjustments are rooted in a long-standing ethos that encourages law enforcement agencies to divert from formal court proceedings those juveniles who are involved in minor delinquent activity. These diversions enable the best possible use of limited law enforcement and judicial resources, and give unruly youths an opportunity to understand the seriousness of their behavior, with the hope that they will not repeat it. In his directive, Attorney General Harvey put forth Stationhouse Adjustment Guidelines for all municipal and other law

enforcement agencies having patrol jurisdiction in New Jersey. Training opportunities regarding the guidelines, as well as the use of effective stationhouse adjustment techniques, will be provided by experienced prosecutors and juvenile officers, and will be coordinated through the Division of Criminal Justice.

Focus on Detention Alternatives, Disproportionate Minority Confinement

Throughout 2005, the Attorney General's Office and the JJC continued to devote time, energy and resources to the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). The JDAI is a national initiative that encourages juvenile justice agencies to identify — and employ — alternatives to the secure detention of young offenders while maintaining public safety and juvenile court appearance rates. The JJC's work in this regard was made possible by a \$200,000 grant from the nationally-recognized Annie E. Casey Foundation of Baltimore. To be certain, it is a complex and multi-faceted task to find suitable alternatives to secure detention while also maintaining public safety. It requires juvenile justice agencies to collect and analyze comprehensive data, and to be thorough — as well as unblinkingly objective — in analyzing their existing protocols, implementing new strategies, and measuring outcomes. A major focus of the JJC's work in 2005 focused on

Juveniles in JJC Custody work daily to develop teamwork (immediate right), keep pace with their academic studies and learn job skills through programs like the culinary training at far right.



'Stationhouse Adjustment' To Be Used Statewide for Minor Juvenile Offenses

By Mary P. Gallagher

Youths who commit minor offenses will get the same chance to avoid arrest and a criminal record no matter where they live in New Jersey, under a new mandate from the attorney general.

The Dec. 7 directive requires police departments to use a process known as a

stationhouse adjustment. The victim must also agree to the adjustment over the telephone or by attending the meeting and signing the form. A victim who objects can force the case to court.

Stationhouse adjustment has several advantages, law enforcement officials say.

For one, it keeps youths out of the system and avoids the stigma of a

prosecutors should handle juvenile matters. It encouraged stationhouse adjustments as "an appropriate law enforcement response to non-serious juvenile activity that does not warrant either the taking of a juvenile into custody or the filing of a complaint alleging delinquency."

It also approved of "curbside warnings," a community policing method where police tell the youths to stop the

at least one officer designated to handle juvenile matters in 343 towns.

The report did not identify which towns use stationhouse adjustment but some official town Web sites, such as those for Verona, Holmdel, West Orange and Glen Rock, mention its availability.

There was little consistency in how regularly stationhouse adjustment was used in a given department, what procedures were used or the type of records

the issue of disproportionate minority confinement. In 2005, five pilot counties — Atlantic, Camden, Essex, Hudson and Monmouth — continued to work with the JJC on addressing this priority issue. In addition, a state-level JDAI Steering Committee was established in 2005. Among other things, the State Steering Committee worked on development and refinement of a “risk-screening tool” to be applied when a juvenile is being processed at intake. The main function of the risk-screening tool is to help ensure appropriate juvenile detention placement decisions, and to avoid placements that may be inappropriate, or harmful, to either the juvenile in question or others. In 2005, the Steering Committee’s work resulted in 151 fewer youth being placed in secure detention each day, as well as increased accountability and consistency within the statewide juvenile justice system. The JJC’s Office of Local Programs and Services continues to oversee the effort.

In-House Medical, Mental Health Services Launched

On January 1, 2005, the JJC began providing “in-house” medical services for approximately 650 young people housed in its secure facilities. In addition, early 2005 marked the launch of a partnership with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) to provide young offenders in JJC custody with mental health services. The changes were part of an ongoing effort to streamline and enhance the delivery of health care services to young people throughout the JJC system.

In the past, the medical needs of young people in JJC custody were covered under a contract between the Department of Corrections and a medical services provider. With the medical services contract set to expire, the JJC took the opportunity to rethink its approach to providing health services.

The core philosophy behind the change was that JJC could better serve its goal of addressing all the needs a young person may have — physical, emotional and behavioral — by handling medical services in-house. The change provided an opportunity to custom-tailor JJC medical services so as to be cost effective, while still including the preventive health care and educational components needed for an adolescent population.

“Adolescence is a developmental stage and learning how to care for oneself is part of it,” said JJC Executive Director Howard Beyer.

“Young people must receive quality health care treatment as their needs require, but they also must be taught about what is medically important if we are to expect them to return to society and live productive lives.”

As part of its new approach to medical services, the JJC appointed a new Health Care Administrator, Harold Brown, of Atco, Camden County. Brown holds an MBA in Health Care Administration and Finance from Rutgers University. Most recently he was employed by the Greenbriar Healthcare Center as Assistant Administrator, and served as chair of its Infection Control, Quality Improvement and Safety Committee.

The JJC also hired approximately 35 new physicians, nurses and support staff in 2005 to ensure that young people in its care receive appropriate and timely medical attention. JJC medical staff are assigned to the Commission’s five secure care facilities including: New Jersey Training School in Monroe Township, Middlesex County, the Life Skills and Leadership Academy located in Tabernacle, in Burlington County, and the Juvenile Medium Secure Facility, Juvenile Reception and Assessment Center, and the Female Secure Care and Intake Facility located on the JJC’s campus in Bordentown, Burlington County.

Meanwhile, a partnership between the JJC and UMDNJ’s University Behavioral HealthCare meant that in-house mental health services were offered at JJC beginning in January 2005.



Howard Beyer
Director

Juvenile Justice Commission

The New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (JJJC) is the state agency responsible for providing juvenile rehabilitation and parole services. Established in 1995, the JJJC serves to coordinate services and policies affecting delinquent youth throughout the state. The JJJC operates a total of 26 facilities including five secure facilities, 10 residential community homes, six day programs, three substance abuse programs and two special needs facilities. From delinquency prevention and juvenile facility operations to vocational and academic training for young offenders and parole services, the JJJC is a partner in the entire juvenile justice system.

- Executive Director, Howard L. Beyer
- Deputy Executive Director, Thomas Flanagan
- Director, Rosanne Fairbanks - Office of Administration
- Director, John Amberg - Office of Education
- Director, Brigitte Mitchell-Morton - Office of Secure Care
- Director, Robert Montalbano - Office of Community Programs
- Director, William Curry - Office of Juvenile Parole & Transitional Services
- Lisa Macaluso, Director - Office of Local Programs & Services
- Director, Winson Crespo - Office of Investigations
- Director, Barbara Chayt - Office of Specialized and Interagency Services

www.NJJJC.org



The implementation of in-house mental health services was vital, because nearly 67% of juveniles committed to the JJC are diagnosed with at least one mental health problem including anxiety disorder, post traumatic stress syndrome, depression and substance abuse dependency.

The availability of in-house services is expected to help ensure that juvenile offenders dealing with mental illness will receive the treatment most appropriate to ensuring their safety — and the safety of others — in a correctional setting, and pursuing a positive life direction upon returning to the community. In order to continue providing a full spectrum of health care services, the JJC also contracted in 2005 with the St. Francis Medical Center in Trenton to provide hospitalization for young people whose illnesses or injuries require it.

In a related development, the JJC developed a contract with UMDNJ in 2005 to provide mental-health-related training for custody staff working in JJC secure care facilities and county detention centers. Entitled “Creating Safe and Respectful Environments,” the staff training centers on increasing sensitivity to young people with special needs, employing positive approaches to problem solving, and using “de-escalating techniques” to defuse potentially volatile situations.

Parole Supervision: Increasing Vigilance, Enhancing Training

Tending to the needs and issues presented by young people in its secure facilities and group residential homes was only one aspect of the JJC’s work in 2005. Elsewhere, the JJC continued working through various parole supervision efforts to ensure that, upon a young person’s return to the community, he or she is effectively supervised, and that the community is protected.

The JJC established its first-ever Parole Response Unit (PRU) in 2005. The PRU is charged with the responsibility of actively pursuing and apprehending juvenile parolees who have not

maintained their reporting schedules. Officers assigned to the PRU receive extensive training both prior to assuming their duties, and while “in service.” During the first six months of its operation, the PRU’s primary mission was to establish partnerships with law enforcement agencies — particularly County Prosecutors’ Offices and local police departments — and conduct fugitive investigations in order to apprehend missing juvenile parolees.

Since June 1, 2005, more than 90 fugitive investigations were initiated. Sixty-five fugitive juvenile parolees were caught and returned, either to JJC custody or to state Superior Court. There were no major problems or public safety incidents during these fugitive apprehension efforts. The Parole Response Unit also participated in various community service programs in 2005.

Equine Program: Hands-on Experience, Animal Husbandry Credits

After almost a year of preparation, two horses — one male and one female — for the JJC’s new Equine Program were delivered to the New Jersey Training School in November 2005. The Equine Program is a joint effort between the JJC and the Standardbred Retirement Foundation, with assistance provided through a contract with Rutgers University’s Cook College.

The horses, an 11-year-old gelding named Franco Nomad, and a seven-year-old mare named Doctor Jo Plumstead, have been donated by the Standardbred Retirement Foundation, which retains actual ownership of the horses. The Standardbred Retirement Foundation (SRF) was created in 1989 to ensure the humane treatment of Standardbred Horses, and to provide the adoption services necessary to ensure the horses receive a caring and loving home.

The goal of the JJC’s Equine Program is to prepare students to become grooms, an entry

point to a career in the standardbred industry. The education program covers various equine and industry-related areas, including: how to take care of a horse, anatomy of a horse, barn management, proper grooming techniques, and appropriate equine equipment and supplies. JJC students receive vocational credits in animal husbandry for their participation.

The Standard Retirement Foundation is also assisting with supplies & equipment for the JJC’s program, and will also provide veterinary services as needed. Rutgers provides staff coverage on weekends and holidays, as well as program supplies and guest speakers from the equine industry. The JJC has hired an Equine Instructor with more than 20 years of experience in the equine industry, including racing and training standardbreds, and maintaining stables.

Two JJC Staffers Receive National Honor for Gang Prevention Efforts

Two members of the JJC’s Gang Management Unit received the National Gang Crime Research Center’s (NGCRC) 2005 Thrasher Award. The award was presented to staffers Dominick Cicala and Allen Mitchell at the opening session of the NGCRC’s annual conference and award ceremony in Chicago in August.

NGCRC is a non-profit organization that researches and disseminates information on gangs and gang members, and provides training and consulting services. The Thrasher Award was created in 1992 to recognize outstanding achievement in the effort to reduce gang activity. The award is named in honor of Frederick Milton Thrasher, the author of a 1927 study of Chicago gangs that included the first social scientific analysis of gangs.

Recipients Cicala and Mitchell were instrumental in creating the JJC’s comprehensive gang awareness program. The program addresses youth gang activity at all levels. With funding from the New Jersey Department of Education, the JJC developed a cutting-edge education curriculum, entitled Phoenix, which corresponds to the State’s Core Curriculum Standards. The workbook-based course can be tailored for youth in secure detention and JJC residential and day programs, as well as county-operated detention centers and community-based programs. The most important goal of the curriculum is developing skills that enable juveniles to understand how to react to situations that pose a risk of gang involvement, and to avoid future gang activity by thinking through their actions and responses to those situations.

Skills training programs such as cosmetology and horticulture are an important part of preparing juveniles to return to their home communities.

